



Welcome to
TheRadicalAgeMovement's
Intergenerational Age Cafe

The Age Café is open to people of all ages, young and old, and is based on the concept of The [World Café](#), which is a powerful way for engaging people in conversations that matter.

TheRadicalAgeMovement, which seeks to confront ageism and advocates for #AgeJustice, believes that our Movement can only succeed if all generations come together in this effort.

One of our signature programs is our Age Café.
This guide provides you with the tools you need to hold your own Age Café.



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What are Age Café Conversations?

Age Café

is an easy-to-use method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions related to aging that matter in service to real work. Age Café conversations are based on the principles and format developed by the World Café, a global movement to support conversations that matter in corporate, government, and community settings around the world.

Age Café is also

a provocative metaphor enabling us to see new ways to make a difference in our lives and work. The power of conversation is so invisible and natural that we usually overlook it. For example, consider all the learning and action choices that occur as people move from one conversation to another inside our organizations and communities. What if we considered all of these conversations as one big dynamic Café, each a table in a larger network of living conversations which is the core process for sharing our collective knowledge and shaping our future? Once we become aware of the power of conversation as a key process in all aspects of our lives, we can use it more effectively for our mutual benefit.

What's essential about the Age Café method?

We have outlined a series of guidelines for putting conversation's about aging to work through dialogue and engagement. If you use these guidelines in planning your meetings and gatherings, you'll find you are able to create a unique environment where surprising and useful outcomes are likely to occur. An Age Café is always intimate, even when it scales to very large numbers.

People already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges; that the answers we need are available to us; and that we are Wiser Together than we are alone..

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Age Café Guidelines

Conducting an exciting Age Café Conversation is not hard—it's limited only by your imagination! The Age Café format is flexible and adapts to many different circumstances. When these design principles are used together they foster collaborative dialogue, active engagement, and constructive possibilities for action.

Set the Context

Pay attention to the reason you are bringing people together, and what you want to achieve. Knowing the purpose and parameters of your meeting enables you to consider and choose the most important elements to realize your goals: e.g. who should be part of the conversation, what themes or questions will be most pertinent, what sorts of harvest will be more useful, etc..

Create Hospitable Space

Café hosts around the world emphasize the power and importance of creating a hospitable space—one that feels safe and inviting. When people feel comfortable to be themselves, they do their most creative thinking, speaking, and listening. In particular, consider how your invitation and your physical set-up contribute to creating a welcoming atmosphere.

Explore Questions that Matter

Knowledge emerges in response to compelling questions. Find questions that are relevant to the real-life concerns of the group. Powerful questions that “travel well” help attract collective energy, insight, and action as they move throughout a system. Depending on the timeframe available and your objectives, your Café may explore a single question or use a progressively deeper line of inquiry through several conversational rounds.

[At the end of this guide, you will find suggested questions about aging and how to confront ageism]

Encourage Everyone's Contribution

As leaders we are increasingly aware of the importance of participation, but most people don't only want to participate, they want to actively contribute to making a difference. It is important to encourage everyone in your meeting to contribute their ideas and perspectives, while also allowing anyone who wants to participate by simply listening to do so.

Connect Diverse Perspectives

The opportunity to move between tables, meet new people, actively contribute your thinking, and link the essence of your discoveries to ever-widening circles of thought is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Café. As participants carry key ideas or themes to new tables, they exchange perspectives, greatly enriching the possibility for surprising new insights.

Listen Together for Patterns & Insights

Listening is a gift we give to one another. The quality of our listening is perhaps the most important factor determining the success of a Café. Through practicing shared listening and paying attention to themes, patterns and insights, we begin to sense a connection to the larger whole. Encourage people to listen for what is not being spoken along with what is being shared.

Share Collective Discoveries

Conversations held at one table reflect a pattern of wholeness that connects with the conversations at the other tables. The last phase of the Café, often called the “harvest”, involves making this pattern of wholeness visible to everyone in a large group conversation. Invite a few minutes of silent reflection on the patterns, themes and deeper questions experienced in the small group conversations and call them out to share with the larger group.

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Age Café Conversations at a Glance

- Seat four-eight people at tables or in conversation clusters.
- Set up progressive (at least three) rounds of conversation, approximately 20 minutes each.
- Engage questions or issues about aging that genuinely matter to your life, work, or community.
- Encourage participants to write, doodle and draw key ideas on their tablecloths (and/ or note key ideas on large index cards or placemats in the center of the table). (*optional*)
- Upon completing the initial round of conversation, you may ask one person to remain at the table as a “table host” for the next round, while the others serve as travelers or “ambassadors of meaning.” The travelers carry key ideas, themes and questions into their new conversations, while the table host welcomes the new set of travelers.
- By providing opportunities for people to move in several rounds of conversation, ideas, questions, and themes begin to link and connect. At the end of the second or third round, all of the tables or conversation clusters in the room will be cross-pollinated with insights from prior conversations.
- In the last round of conversation, people can return to their first table to synthesize their discoveries, or they may continue traveling to new tables.
- You may use the same question for one or more rounds of conversation, or you may pose different questions in each round to build on and help deepen the exploration.
- After at least three rounds of conversation, initiate a period of sharing discoveries & insights in a whole group conversation. It is in these town meeting-style conversations that patterns can be identified, collective knowledge grows, and possibilities for action emerge.

Once you know what you want to achieve and the amount of time you have to work with, you can decide the appropriate number and length of conversation rounds, the most effective use of questions and the most interesting ways to connect and cross-pollinate ideas.

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The Importance of Age Café Question(s)

The questions(s) you use for a World Café conversation are critical to its success. Your Café may explore a single question or several questions may be developed to support a logical progression of discovery throughout several rounds of dialogue.

A Powerful Question

Keep in mind that...

- Well-crafted questions attract energy and focus our attention to what really counts. Experienced World Café hosts recommend posing open-ended questions—the kind that don't have yes or no answers
- Good questions need not imply immediate action steps or problem solving. They should invite inquiry and discovery vs. advocacy and advantage.
- You'll know you have a good question when it continues to surface new ideas and possibilities.
- Bounce possible questions off of key people who will be participating to see if they sustain interest and energy.
- *is simple and clear*
- *is thought-provoking*
- *generates energy*
- *focuses inquiry*
- *surfaces unconscious assumptions* • *opens new possibilities*

Five Ways to Make Collective Knowledge Visible

Use a Graphic Recorder In some Café events the whole group conversation is captured by a graphic recorder who draws the Group's ideas in flip charts or a wall mural using text and graphics to illustrate the patterns of the conversation.

Take a Gallery Tour At times people will place the paper tablecloths from the tables on the wall so members can take a tour of the group's idea during a break

Post Your Insights Participants can place large Post-Its with a single key insight on each on a blackboard, wall, etc. so that everyone can review the ideas during a break.

Create Idea Clusters Group Post-Its into 'affinity clusters' so that related ideas are visible and available for planning that group's next steps

Make a Story Some Age Café hosts create a newspaper or storybook to bring the results of their work to larger audiences after the event, using graphic recordings along with text as documentation.

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How to Create a Café Ambiance

Whether you are convening several dozen or several hundred people, it is essential to create an environment that evokes a feeling of both informality and intimacy. When your guests arrive they should know immediately that this is no ordinary meeting ...

- If possible, select a space with natural light and an outdoor view to create a more welcoming atmosphere.
- Make the space look like an actual Café, with small tables that seat four or five people. Less than four at a table may not provide enough diversity of perspectives, more than five limits the amount of personal interaction.
- Arrange the Cafe tables in a staggered, random fashion rather than in neat rows. Tables in a sidewalk café after it has been open for a few hours look relaxed and inviting
- Use colorful tablecloths and a small vase of flowers on each table. If the venue allows it add a candle to each table. Place plants or greenery around the room.
- Place at least two large sheets of paper over each tablecloth along with a mug or wineglass filled with colorful markers. Paper and pens encourage scribbling, drawing, and connecting ideas. In this way people will jot down ideas as they emerge.
- Put one additional Café table in the front of the room for the Host's and any presenter's material

Consider displaying art or adding posters to the walls (as simple as flip chart sheets with quotes), and play music as people arrive and you welcome the

To honor the tradition of community and hospitality provide beverages and snacks. A Café isn't complete without food and refreshments!

Café Supplies

Tables to sit 4-8 People
Enough Chairs for All
Colorful Tablecloths (optional)
Flipchart Paper or Paper Placemats to Cover Table
Colored Markers and Holders
Side Table for Refreshments & Snacks
Tape (or use giant Post-It pads)
Flat Wall Space for Posting Collective Work and/or Work of the Table

Optional

Overhead Projector and screen or Power Point Setup
Music
Mics
Easels & Flipcharts
Small Post-Its in Bright Colors

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I'm the Café Host; what do I do?

The job of the Café Host is to see that the seven design principles - the guidelines for dialogue and engagement - are put into action.

It is not the specific form, but living the spirit of the guidelines that counts.

Hosting a Café requires thoughtfulness, artistry and care. The Café Host can make the difference between an interesting conversation & one that truly matters.

- Work with the planning team to determine the purpose of the Café and decide who should be invited to the gathering.
 - Name your Café in a way appropriate to its purpose, for example: Leadership Café; Knowledge Café; Strategy Café; Discovery Café, etc. TheRadicalAgeMovement uses Age Café.
 - Help frame the invitation.
 - Work with others to create a comfortable Café environment.
 - Welcome the participants as they enter.
 - Explain the purpose of the gathering.
 - Pose the question or themes for rounds of conversation and make sure that the question is visible to everyone on an overhead, flip chart or on cards at each table.
 - Explain the Café guidelines and Café Etiquette and post them on an overhead, an easel sheet or on cards at each table.
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- Explain how the logistics of the Café will work, including the role of the Table Host (the person who volunteers to remain at the end of a round of conversation and welcome new people for the next round).
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- During the conversation, move among the tables.
 - Encourage everyone to participate.
 - Remind people to note key ideas, doodle and draw.
 - Let people know in a gentle way when it's time to move and begin a new round of conversation.
 - Make sure key insights are recorded visually or are gathered and posted if possible.
 - Be creative in adapting the seven Café Design Principles, or guidelines, to meet the unique needs of your situation.

I'm a Table Host; what do I do?

Remain at the table when others leave and welcome travelers from other tables for the next round of conversation.

Assign a Notetaker or Hosts can be notetakers.

Briefly share key insights from the prior conversation so others can link and build using ideas from their respective tables.

Gently & as appropriate, encourage people at your table to jot down key connections, ideas, discoveries, and deeper questions as they emerge.

Because people are used to behaving a certain way when they are a facilitator or “being facilitated”, there can be a danger with inexperienced Table Hosts taking on more of a role than is meant here.

There are no facilitators in a World Café, only hosts. Everyone at the tables is responsible for hosting themselves and each other.

Stay in Touch!

As you experiment with hosting your own Café conversations, we'd love to hear from you, both about your Café experiences and the ways we can make this Guide more useful. info@radicalagemovement.org

A Message from The World Cafe

Contact info@theworldcafe.com with ideas and feedback.

And for further detailed background information, including Café stories, additional hosting tips, supporting articles, and links to related Café and dialogue initiatives, please visit our website: <http://www.theworldcafe.com>

On the following pages you will find suggested questions and photographs of past Age Cafes.

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Some Suggested Age Café Questions

Below are some suggestions for questions you may want to pose at your Age Café'. These are only meant to guide you as you develop your own questions. Age Café's can be designed to confront general issues of age discrimination or may be designed to search for answers that address particular concerns; i.e. age discrimination in healthcare, the workforce, the media, government, etc.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

What is age discrimination/ageism?

Where do you find it and what does it look like?

Are you comfortable to say your age in "mixed company"? (with people younger or older than you) Why? What feelings come up for you?

What does your age mean?

When does a person become old?

How long would you like to live?

Can a person live to be too old?

What's good about being old?

Do others treat you differently because they see you as "old"?

Why is saying one is "old" considered a taboo?

Do you feel old? If so, why or when?

How do you feel when a younger person offers you a seat on a bus, train, subway?

Do you ever feel invisible?

Are you satisfied with the way you look?

Do you ever feel irrelevant? What makes you feel that way?

Throughout your life have you ever been the victim of discrimination of any kind?

Is age discrimination the first 'ism' that you've had to contend with?

What assumptions do people make about you based on your age?

What assumptions do you make about other people based on their age?

Do you treat all people, regardless of age, with dignity and respect?

What can we do to confront ageism?

WORKFORCE QUESTIONS

Have you ever been discriminated against at work because of your age?

Do you feel you were overlooked at a meeting, training, or discussion group because of your age?

Have you been overlooked for a promotion because of your age?

Have you been fired because of your age?

Has finding a job become harder because of your age?

Do you feel excluded?

INTERGENERATIONAL QUESTIONS

Do you have friends of all ages? Would you like to have friends of all ages?

Are you uncomfortable when you are in a group of people who are all older or younger than you?

What do you think are the issues that older adults worry about when they think of aging?

What do you think are the issues that younger adults worry about when they think of aging?

Are you bothered by Millennials? Are they bothered by you?

Are you bothered by old people? Are they bothered by you?

What steps can we take to create an inter-generational society?

When in your life were you first introduced to someone very old?

What did you think? How did you feel?

Are you comfortable asking for help from someone younger?

Are you comfortable offering help to someone older?

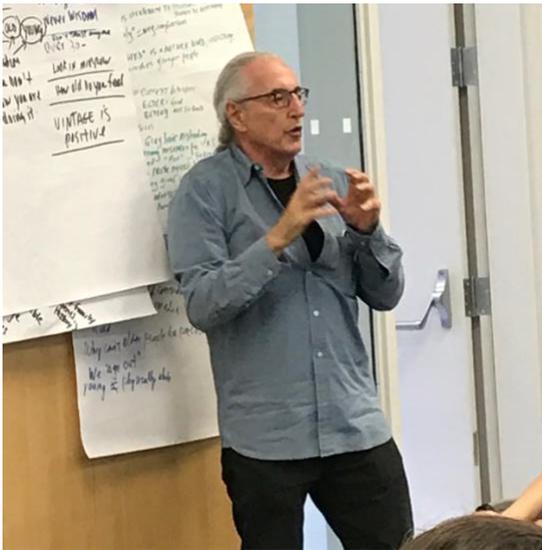
AGE JUSTICE QUESTIONS

What does 'age equality' mean to you?

What would 'Age Justice' look like?

What are some of the key ways we can confront age prejudice?

Age Café Photographs



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